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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [JO](#) [SY](#)  
SUBJECT: UNHCR IRAQI REFUGEE ASSISTANCE RESPONSE PLAN  
FACILITATES COLLABORATION WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS

¶1. Summary: (SBU) While coordinating the 2010 Regional Refugee Assistance Response Plan (RRP), UNHCR in Amman, Beirut, Cairo, and Damascus improved the organization of all the regional Iraqi refugee activities. The RRP performs the function of a management mechanism previous filled by the Country Operational Planning (COP) process. Over the past three months, Karen Gulick of UNHCR conducted a series of stakeholder meetings in the regional capitals to recruit participants, and to establish the terms of reference for sector working groups, the focal point of UNHCR's regional plan. The result of Gulick's efforts has been an overall approval for the process by the stakeholders, which most describe as more collaborative, and less cumbersome than the previously attempted coordination exercises. End summary.

A New Coordination Method Brings buy-in From NGOs  
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¶2. (SBU) In preparation for the January 18, 2010 launch of the refugee response plan, UNHCR held a series of meetings with donors, NGOs, international organizations, and governments to solicit their participation in the planning sessions, and drafting exercise. The goal was to examine sector by sector the needs of Iraqi refugees, and the response capabilities of all actors currently providing services to them outside of Iraq. Initial reaction from the stakeholders was positive. UNHCR formed a series of working groups based roughly on similar groups formed for CAP. These working groups were responsible for drafting sector response plans and for reviewing the overall document to ensure that beneficiary needs in all sectors were reflected in the final draft document. After the launch of the plan, the working groups continue to act as an informal monitoring and consulting body for each service sector.

¶3. (SBU) UNHCR invited both implementing and operating partners, as well as those working independently of UNHCR, to participate in the groups, with positive results. Although the working groups were defined and formed by UNHCR, some were led by NGOs in partnership with other IOs. The membership of working groups varied from country to country. The protection working group, in all cases, was chaired by UNHCR because of its clear mandate for refugee protection. However, UNICEF and NGOs were strong voices in these working groups, advocating for special protection regarding the needs of women and children. In Lebanon, where the NGO presence is small, most international NGOs participated in all the working groups. In Syria and Jordan, where NGOs are numerous, the organizations rotated memberships. Governments were also invited to attend. In Syria, the Ministries of Education and Health participated in some of the working groups, and UNHCR managed to attract the Syria Arab Red Crescent as well. In Jordan and Lebanon, the government did not participate regularly in any of the working groups.

Coordination Process Still Evolving  
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¶4. (SBU) Some participants in the new coordination process objected to the unilateral way UNHCR created the working groups. NGOs active in mental health and psychosocial activities in Lebanon and Jordan expressed concern that UNHCR had not planned sufficiently to ensure that mental health needs were appropriately covered by the response plan. UNHCR responded to this criticism by asking WHO and International Medical Corps to closely review the plan and ensure that mental health and psychosocial needs were addressed.

The Final Product--The Beginnings of a Comprehensive Plan  
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¶5. (SBU) By November 2009, all four countries submitted draft documents to the UNHCR response plan coordinator. The documents submitted were a comprehensive examination of needs in the various sectors with recommendations on how those needs would best be met. Country offices had considerable independence in organizing the work in their respective countries. For example, UNHCR Lebanon created a relief and community empowerment working group to address needs in material assistance, livelihoods development and vocational training. In Jordan, similar sectors are covered in a locally organized community based-protection working group.

¶6. (SBU) The response plan is not meant to be a tool for donors, and will not include a comprehensive budget, or a list of proposed projects for each sector. Rather, stakeholders contributed a list of possible programming alternatives to augment UNHCR strategic planning. NGOs were called in during the early stages of UNHCR's process to

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contribute to the RRP. To do that, NGOs and other IOs reviewed the details of UNHCR planning and budget requirements with an eye to filling possible gaps. UNHCR staff answered participant's questions, and provided a degree of transparency for organizations normally not invited into the internal planning process of the UN organization.

Comment: Not the Beginning of the End, But a Start  
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¶7. (SBU) The UNHCR planning process was not a perfect tool. No refugees participated in the planning process, and local government representation was spotty. However, NGO and IO participation was an improvement on the classic top down UNHCR approach to the COP. In all four countries, the personalities of the NGOs and the UN country team played a role in the success of the mechanism. In Lebanon and Egypt, where the UN country team has only a passing interest in Iraqi refugees, UNHCR and NGOs led the process; UNICEF and WHO did not attend working groups. In Syria, a strong UN country team led by the resident coordinator participated fully in the working groups. In Jordan, UNHCR faced a minor rebellion when NGOs and IOs objected to UNHCR's working group framework. Subsequently, UNICEF and WHO used the coordination mechanism to increase their involvement in the refugee assistance planning. The coordination mechanism launched with this new process was a positive evolution in UNHCR's efforts to better coordinate its mandated activities in refugee emergencies. End comment.  
Beecroft